



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST

Are Children Safe in Your Home?



2010

**North Dakota Department of Health
Division of Injury Prevention and Control**

For more information, call 701.328.4536 or 800.472.2286

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A Message from the State Health Officer

Terry Dwelle, M.D.
North Dakota Department of Health

Our children are precious. That's why it's so important for parents and caregivers to make sure they are safe – especially in their homes.

Too many children are injured each year in North Dakota, and many of those injuries occur in homes where children should be safe to grow up strong and healthy. I encourage you to use this important checklist to discover and fix any hazards that may endanger your children.

If you have any questions, feel free to call the injury prevention professionals at the North Dakota Department of Health. They are here to help.



Preface

The home is the second most common location of unintentional fatal injuries in the United States. The rates for injuries occurring in the home are highest among young children compared to other age groups. About 2½ million children are injured or killed due to hazards in the home each year. Their stages of physical development make them vulnerable population groups for fatal injury. Children may become injured while engaging in normal exploratory behaviors, lacking the judgment to avoid dangers. They often experience more home injuries, in part because they spend more time in the home environment, compared to other age groups who spend large amounts of time at school and/or work. The good news is that many of these incidents can be prevented by identifying and correcting the hazard.

Use this checklist as a guide to go through your home and look for potential risks. If you find hazards in the home using this checklist, take care of the hazards right away to eliminate injuries. Please note this checklist may not represent all of the potential hazards in your home but includes most of the common dangers found in a child's environment.

This checklist cannot stand alone because active supervision is one of the best tools for injury prevention.

KITCHEN

1. Are sharp items, such as knives and scissors, stored in a cabinet or drawer with a safety latch or lock? Y N

- Keep sharp items out of children's reach. Children are curious and like to investigate closed drawers. Install safety latches or locks on cabinets or drawers.

2. Are vitamins and medicines stored out of sight or reach of children? Y N

- Pills sometimes look like candy, and children can become sick or overdose on medicines.
- Store in locked cabinets or drawers and not on countertops, even when people are visiting.

3. Are household products – such as cleaning supplies, dishwashing compounds or drain cleaners – stored in cabinets with safety latches or locks or out of the reach of children? Y N

- Look around your home – under the sinks and in the garage – for cleaning products or automotive fluids that say “Caution,” “Warning” or “Danger” on the label.
- Store these items away from food and in locked cabinets out of the sight and reach of children.
- Keep the poison control center toll-free number by every phone in the house, 800.222.1222.

4. Are all flammable items away from range or oven? Y N

- Remove any towels or combustible items in the space surrounding the cooking area.

5. Do you take these precautions while cooking?**Y N**

- Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.
- Stay in the kitchen at all times when food is cooking on the stove.
- Use protective dials made for stoves if children can reach the knobs.
- Keep hot liquids out of the reach of children.
- Use the back burners whenever possible.
- Unplug small appliances and put them away when not in use.
- Make sure the microwave is out of the reach of children. They can easily open the microwave door and remove hot contents, which could be a burn hazard.
- Never heat a baby's bottle in the microwave.

6. Does your high chair have a waist and a crotch strap?**Y N**

- While in the high chair, babies always should be restrained by both straps.



BATHROOM

1. **Are medicines and vitamins stored out of a child's reach or in a cabinet with a safety latch or lock?** Y N
 - Make sure houseguests keep their medicines out of reach, as well.

2. **Are electrical appliances (radio, hair dryer, curling iron, space heater) used away from water, out of a child's reach, and unplugged after each use?** Y N
 - Many children do not understand the dangers of electrocution and could possibly play with electrical appliances if they are in reach.
 - Ensure hairdryers have built-in shock protection devices in the plug.

3. **When children are in the bathtub, does an adult always watch them?** Y N
 - Supervise children in the tub at all times. Avoid leaving the bathroom for quick errands, such as answering the phone or the door, doing laundry, etc.
 - Children can drown in a few inches of water or can be burned if they turn on the hot water.
 - Never, even for a moment, rely on bath rings or seats to keep baby safe in water.

4. **Does the bathtub or shower have a nonskid mat or strips on the standing area?** Y N
 - Nonskid mats or strips help prevent slippery surfaces, decreasing the chances of a child slipping.



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| <p>5. Is the hot water adjusted to 120 degrees or less to prevent tap water scalds?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let water run for three to five minutes before testing it. • Use a meat or candy thermometer to test the temperature in a glass of hot water from your tap. • Your hot water temperature is _____ degrees. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>6. Are sharp or dangerous objects stored out of a child's reach?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nail scissors, tweezers and razors can be very hazardous in small hands. Store them in a locked location out of the reach of children. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>7. Are toilet lids always closed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children who can pull themselves to a standing position (around 7 months) can fall head first into an open toilet and drown. You may want to consider devices that lock your toilet lid to keep baby from opening it. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>8. Are doors kept closed for additional child proofing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doorknob locking devices are available to keep children from opening doors and entering rooms they are not supposed to enter. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>9. Are countertops and/or vanities free from sharp corners?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corner bumpers are recommended for sharp edges and are available at stores. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>10. Is your trashcan covered with a lid?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are curious and will reach for items in the trash. | <p>Y N</p> |

COMMON CHILD AREAS

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| <p>1. Do windows have screens that are secure or window guards to keep a child from falling out?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Window guards and safety netting for balconies and decks can help prevent serious falls. • There should be no more than 4 inches between the bars of the window guard. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>2. Are toys free from loose parts, sharp edges or points, long cords, and lead?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure toys are age appropriate. For example, some toys may be too small for infants, and they may put them into their mouth and choke. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>3. Does the toy chest have either a lightweight lid, no lid or a slow-closing lid?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dropping lid can cause injury to the head and neck, or it may cause suffocation. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>4. Can air get in when the toy chest is closed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airtight containers can cause suffocation. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>5. Are open buckets of liquids out of reach of children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children who can pull themselves to a standing position (around 7 months) can fall head first into an open bucket and drown. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>6. Are bookshelves anchored to the wall?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young children can be injured when furniture tips over. Children often try to climb furniture. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>7. Are bunk beds without corner posts?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children may get hung up on corner posts and suffocate. | <p>Y N</p> |

8. Are electrical cords beyond a child's reach?**Y N**

- Children can pull electrical cords, and the equipment could fall on them.
- Consider using an electric wire guard to hide cords.
- Move furniture to hide electric cords and to keep them out of reach.

9. Do you have shock prevention plugs or covers on unused electrical outlets?**Y N**

- Be sure the outlet protectors cannot be removed easily by children and are large enough so that children cannot choke on them.

10. Does the bunk bed mattress fit the bed frame completely?**Y N**

- Too much spacing around the bunk beds may create entrapment areas where children can get caught and suffocate.

11. Is the bunk bed spacing between the bed frame and the bottom of guardrails no greater than 3 1/2 inches?**Y N**

- Too much spacing around the bunk beds may create entrapment areas where children can get caught and suffocate. A child's body may fit through the slots but his head may become trapped.



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| <p>12. Are window blind cords out of reach for children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children can get caught in cords and become strangled. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>13. Are corner posts on the crib no higher than 1/16 inch?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clothing or necklaces may get tangled on corner posts. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>14. Does the crib mattress fit tightly?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you can fit two fingers between the edge of the mattress and crib side, the mattress is too small. An infant's head or body can become lodged in the extra space, causing suffocation. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>15. Are crib slats no more than 2 3/8 inches apart?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If spacing between slots is more than 2 3/8 inches, an infant's body may pass through the slots, but his or her head will not, causing head entrapment or strangulation. • Use an upright soda pop can to measure space between the slats of the crib. If the can passes through the slats, they are too wide. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>16. Was the crib manufactured after 1978?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older cribs may have lead-based paint. • Children may eat paint chips or dust. • Lead is toxic and causes blood poisoning. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>17. Are crib mobiles out of the reach of children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child can become entangled in the toy. • Remove mobiles if your baby is 5 months old or begins to push up on hands and knees. | <p>Y N</p> |

18. Are soft objects, toys and thick bedding out of the baby's sleep area?

Y N

- Keep soft objects, toys and loose bedding out of baby's sleep area, and keep all items away from baby's face.

19. Is crib or bed placed away from windows with blinds or curtains?

Y N

- Children like to play with cords and may become entangled in strings of blinds.

20. Are teething toys, such as rattles or squeeze toys, larger than 1.68 inches in diameter?

Y N

- Anything smaller can be a choking hazard to a child.

21. Are there safety straps on the baby-changing table?

Y N

- Use safety straps on the changing table, but never leave child unattended. Most injuries associated with changing tables occur when children fall from the table.



GARAGE AND YARD

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| <p>1. Are plants, chemicals, gasoline and toxic products out of the reach of children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sure to store these items in cabinets with safety latches or locks or out of the reach of children. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>2. Are garage entrances and vehicles locked so that children cannot enter?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are curious and may venture into enclosed areas that they are unable to get out of. • Do not keep keys to cars or mowers in the ignition. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>3. Are potential hazardous areas – such as unlocked freezers or exposed sharp equipment – inaccessible to children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that freezer chests and refrigerators have child safety locks. • Children are curious and may venture into enclosed areas they are unable to get out of. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>4. Do you have a reversing garage door opener?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These should be installed to eliminate entrapment for both children and adults. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>5. Are tools stored safely?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharp or motorized tools should be stored in a locked cabinet. | <p>Y N</p> |
| <p>6. Are clotheslines high enough for children to pass under?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children playing in the yard may get hung up on lower lines. | <p>Y N</p> |

7. Is play equipment anchored and free from breaks, loose parts, rust or splinters?

Y N

- Periodically check play equipment for these hazards, and make all repairs in a timely fashion.
- Use soft surfacing under and around all outdoor playground equipment. (nine to 12 inches of wood chips, pea gravel, sand or synthetic material is recommended.)
- Always directly supervise children while they are playing on play equipment.

8. Are pools protected from use by unsupervised children?

Y N

- Never leave children unattended near a swimming pool or spa.
- Make sure you have barriers such as a fence or wall, door alarms for the house, and a power safety cover over the pool or spa.
- Make sure the fence or other barrier is at least 4 feet high.
- Make sure vertical fence slats are less than 4 inches apart to prevent a child from squeezing through the fence.

9. While grilling, do you monitor children at all times around charcoal or gas grills?

Y N

- Children may not be aware of hot grills when they are in use.



GENERAL SAFETY

(You may need to use this section of the checklist in more than one room.)

1. Are all window drapery and blind cords out of the reach of children?

Y N

- Children can strangle on drapery and blinds cords that form a loop.

2. If there is a recliner chair in the home, was it manufactured after 1990?

Y N

- Be sure the chair is constructed so there is no more than 5 inches opening between the seat and the leg rest to eliminate a child from becoming trapped in the opening.
- Always keep a recliner closed when not in use.

3. Is a television resting on a sturdy piece of furniture?

Y N

- Place the television on sturdy furniture appropriate for its size or on a low-rise base.
- Push the television as far back as possible on the stand.
- Place electrical cords out of a child's reach, and teach children not to play with electrical cords.



<p>4. Are bookshelves and other large furniture stable on their own?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For added security, attach to the wall or anchor to the floor all entertainment units, TV stands, bookcases, shelving and bureaus using appropriate hardware, such as brackets, screws or toggles. • Remove items that might tempt kids to climb, such as toys and remote controls from the top of the TV and other furniture. 	<p>Y N</p>
<p>5. Are tobacco products and alcoholic beverages out of the reach of children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always keep tobacco and alcoholic beverages out of the reach of children. Children are curious and may eat cigarettes/chewing tobacco or drink what they can reach. Tobacco and alcohol are poisonous to children. 	<p>Y N</p>
<p>6. Are fireplaces or woodstoves out of the reach of children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always supervise a child when a fireplace or woodstove is being used. The supervisor should be between the child and the fireplace to prevent the child from being burned. • Cover sharp corners and edges of fireplaces to prevent cuts and abrasions. 	<p>Y N</p>
<p>7. Are space heaters out of the reach of children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never leave a space heater on when you go to sleep. • Place the heater on a level, hard and nonflammable surface, not on rugs or carpets or near bedding or drapes. • Actively supervise children when using a space heater. The supervisor should be between the child and the space heater to prevent the child from being burned. 	<p>Y N</p>

8. Do you have a family escape plan in case of an emergency?

Y N

- Children need to know what to do in case of a fire. Practice a recommended family escape plan two times a year. If children practice this escape, they are more likely to be properly prepared for an emergency if one does occur.

9. Was your home built after 1979?

Y N

- If you answered no, paint chips or dust from the paint could possibly contain lead. Have your home checked for lead paint, and clean up chipped paint to reduce the risk of lead poisoning.

10. Have you checked if household items in your home are recalled?

Y N

- Check that no recalled products are used in your home. Recalled products have caused burns, broken bones, strangulations, choking and electrocutions.



11. Do you have smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors strategically placed throughout your home?

Y N

- Smoke detectors should be placed on every floor of your home, preferably in or near each bedroom.
- Carbon monoxide detectors are best placed near sleeping rooms.
- Replace batteries and bulbs according to manufacturer's instructions.

12. Are all plants identified and out of the reach of children?

Y N

- Keep plants out of the reach of children because some houseplants are poisonous and can be toxic if swallowed.
- Keep the poison center help line phone number (800.222.1222) with other emergency phone numbers close to telephones.

13. Are laundry chutes locked with child-proof locks?

Y N

- Children could get their heads or bodies stuck in these small spaces.

14. Is your home safe from fire hazards?

Y N

- Keep lighters and matches out of the reach of children.
- Ensure that multi-purpose lighters are equipped with child-resistant safety mechanisms.
- Only adults should light candles, and they should stay in the room when they are lit.
- Keep all candles out of the reach of children.

15. Is your home free from fall hazards?

Y N

- Stairs and hallways should be well lit and free from clutter. Railing slat spacing should not be spaced more than 3 ½ inches apart.
- Grab bars should be installed in showers, tubs and near toilets.
- Handrails along both sides of stairs and steps should be well-secured.
- Always clean up liquid, grease or spills immediately to avoid slipping and falling.
- Use nonskid rugs throughout the home.
- Lamp cords, phone cords and/or extension cords should be out of the flow of foot traffic to avoid tripping.
- Outside surfaces should be free from cracks or holes.
- Patio railing slats should not be spaced more than 3 ½ inches apart.

16. Do you have emergency numbers posted close to the telephone for babysitters and caregivers?

Y **N**

- In an emergency, people get excited and don't always remember phone numbers.
- Include the contact numbers where you can be reached at all times.

17. Do children know how to use the 911 system?

Y **N**

- Children of all ages should be taught to use the 911 system so they'll know what to do in an emergency.





**You have completed your checklist.
If you have answered no to any
of the questions, you have found a
potential risk in your home.**

**Go back through your checklist
and take care of the hazards right
away to eliminate injuries. For more details
on eliminating hazards, visit the websites listed in
this document or call the North Dakota Department
of Health at 800.472.2286.**

Safety Resources

North Dakota Department of Health
www.ndhealth.gov/injury/ 800.472.2286

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
www.cpsc.gov 800.638.2772

Home Safety Council
www.homesafetycouncil.org 202.330.4900

SAFEKIDS Worldwide
www.safekids.org 202.662.0600

Farm Safety 4 Just Kids
www.fs4jk.org/services.html 800.423.5437

National Program for Playground Safety
www.playgroundsafety.org/safety/ 800.554.7529

North Dakota Poison Website
www.ndpoison.org 800.222.1222

North Dakota Fire Marshal
www.ag.nd.gov/FM/FM.htm 701.328.5555

Healthy North Dakota
www.healthynd.org 701.328.4908

North Dakota Safety Council
www.ndsc.org 800.932.8890



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